

measure that is incommensurable with others, incongruous in itself, and fast becoming obsolete?

The founding of the American Ornithologists' Union marks the commencement of a new era in American Ornithology. It is about to establish a stable nomenclature, based upon sound principles, and carried out with painstaking and impartial thoroughness. Let it also advocate, and let its organ 'The Auk,' demonstrate, that American ornithologists abandon the barbarous scale of their forefathers and join the men of science of all nations in adhering to a system of weights and measures that is uniform throughout the world, and whose simplicity and convenience are not among the least of its recommendations.

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[Our correspondent's presentation of the advantages of the metric system and its claims for adoption is not only timely but so fully covers the ground that little need be added in its further advocacy. To the greater part of the present generation of American ornithologists the proposed change will be attended with more or less inconvenience, but should nevertheless be promptly assented to and heartily adopted, in the interest not only of science, but above all for the convenience of our immediate successors. The metric system is presented in our school text-books, and quite generally taught in our public schools; it is, as Dr. Merriam states, the system already most generally employed in science the world over, being used exclusively by the leading scientific writers in all departments of science, including even zoölogy. To make the transition period as brief as may be, it is desirable that the change be promptly and generally made; and to this end we would urge all contributors to the pages of 'The Auk' to give their measurements in the metric system.—EDS.]

NOTES AND NEWS.

HARD upon the letter in which Professor Hermann Schlegel honored the A. O. U. by accepting Foreign Membership of this Association—a letter written *alieno manu*, in consequence of fading eyesight—comes to us the sad news of his death, removing one of the world's great ornithologists. Professor Schlegel died on the 17th of January at the age of 79, having been for some twenty-five years the Director of the Royal Museum at Leyden, and for half a century one of the most active and prominent of European workers in science. He is probably best known in this country by the numerous volumes entitled 'Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle des Pays-Bas,' in which are set forth the great riches of the Leyden collection, in the direction of which he succeeded Temminck on the death of the latter in 1858.

Mention of this name instantly recalls the famous work, 'Fauna Japonica,' by Temminck and Schlegel. Among the other leading works may be mentioned his critical review of European Birds (1844), published in French and German; his Birds of the Netherlands (1854); his 'Handleiding der Dierkunde' (1857); his European Diurnal Birds of Prey and treatise on Falconry; and his researches on the Fauna of Madagascar. One of his earliest treatises was an essay on the Physiognomy of Serpents (1837), said to be the first really scientific work on serpents ever published; and his latest publication was 'Notes from the Leyden Museum.' Our death-roll begins with one of the most illustrious names in ornithological science; but only after the exceptionally protracted and honored career of him who bore it—of one gathered to his fathers in the fulness of time—of one whose works are his imperishable monument.

—By a vote of the Union the Council was empowered to fix the date and place of the next Annual Meeting; and, pursuant to this order, the Council, at a meeting held March 11 in Washington, decided on September 30 next as the time, and New York City as the place, for holding the Annual Meeting of 1884.

—We have received the announcement of the 'Internationale Ornithologische Zeitschrift,' an illustrated quarterly Magazine of Ornithology, to be published at Budapest, Hungary, edited by Dr. Julius von Madarász, Assistant Curator of the Hungarian National Museum. The subscription for the volume is 12 florins.

—'RANDOM Notes on Natural History' is the title of a twelve-page monthly "devoted to the distribution of useful knowledge concerning the various departments of zoölogy, mineralogy, and botany," published by Southwick and Jencks, Providence, R. I. The two numbers that have reached us are carefully edited and neatly printed, and contain, besides the business advertisements of the publishers, many short articles relating to the subjects above mentioned, including various interesting bird notes.

—We are sorry to note that 'The Canadian Naturalist and Sportsman' for December, 1883 (published in February, 1884), contains the announcement that this valuable publication ends with this issue, owing to the pressing business engagements of its editor and publisher, Mr. William Couper. The steady improvement that has marked its course had led us to hope for it a long career of usefulness.

—'BIRD Migration in the Mississippi Valley, by W. W. Cooke and Otto Widmann,' is the title of 'Bulletin No. 1' of the Ridgway Ornithological Club. The paper originally appeared as a series of articles in the 'American Field' (see *antea*, p. 188), and as here reprinted forms a pamphlet of 38 pages, and preserved in convenient form matter of great interest and value.

At the regular monthly meeting of the Ridgway Ornithological Club, held Feb. 7, Mr. B. T. Gault exhibited a hybrid between the Coot and Gallinule, and among the papers read was one by Dr. Morris Gibbs on

the 'Genus *Empidonax*,' and two by Mr. H. K. Coale, respectively on the 'Summer Birds of Hyde Park, Ill.,' and on the 'Winter Birds of Stark County, Indiana.' At the March meeting Mr. Gault read a paper on the breeding habits of *Picus nuttalli*, and Mr. Coale one on *Cypseloides niger borealis*. Mr. G. L. Tappan exhibited a fine male '*Milvulus tyrannus*,' recently taken 'in California'.

—IN the 'Proceedings' of the last annual meeting (1883) of the Boston Society of Natural History we notice the reported existence in the Society's collection of a specimen of the Labrador Duck (*Camptolemus labradorius*) and an immature Black-throated Diver (*Colymbus arcticus*) which have been identified by the donor, the Hon. Theodore Lyman, as specimens which came into his possession in the flesh in 1850, under circumstances leaving little doubt of their Massachusetts origin, they having in all probability been killed in Boston Harbor. This example of the Labrador Duck is additional to those mentioned by the late Mr. G. D. Rowley, in his memoir on this species, as existing in museums.

—THE A. O. U. Committee on the 'Classification and Nomenclature of North American Birds' has held a second session in Washington, lasting eighteen days, which was devoted mainly to a consideration of the status of the species and subspecies. From the progress already made, it seems probable that the Committee will be able to make a detailed and final report to the Union at its next meeting.

—THE plan of the work undertaken by the Committee on Bird Migration was fully set forth in the first number of 'The Auk' (pp. 71-76), and a list of the Districts, with their respective Superintendents, as far as at that time arranged, was also given. Eastern Canada, having proved too large for a single District, has since been divided into two: Quebec and the Maritime Provinces remain in charge of Mr. Chamberlain; while Ontario has been placed under the able superintendence of the veteran ornithologist, Mr. Thomas McIlwrath, of Hamilton. Mr. John Fannin of Burrard Inlet, British Columbia, has been appointed Superintendent of British Columbia.

The article published in 'The Auk' was reprinted in circular form, and 3000 copies of it were soon distributed. This number proving insufficient, a second edition of 2000 copies (corrected to date), subsequently issued, was wholly exhausted within a week from the date of leaving the press. Another impression of 1000 copies has since been struck off, and will, it is believed, meet the demands for the remainder of the season.

As a result of this distribution of five thousand circulars, the Committee has already secured about five hundred observers, and the number is daily increasing. At present writing there are observers in every State and Territory in the United States, excepting Alabama, Utah, Wyoming, Idaho, and Nevada, and these vacancies will probably soon be supplied.

Our Canadian Superintendents have thus far secured more than sixty observers—a much larger number than the Committee expected.

Even at this early date the Committee has received formal returns from Newfoundland, and from a large number of Stations in the United States.

Through the courtesy of the Hon. Wm. Smith, Deputy Minister of Marine and Fisheries of Canada, and of Commander Henry F. Pickering, U. S. N., Secretary of the Lighthouse Board of the United States, the Committee has secured the coöperation of these departments, which, it is hardly necessary to add, is indispensable to the success of the undertaking. The Department of Marine and Fisheries and the Lighthouse Board have distributed over one thousand sets of blank schedules* and circulars to the Lighthouses, Lightships, and Beacons of the United States and British North America.

The Committee has thus far been unable to find a Superintendent for the Lighthouse Division, which consequently remains in charge of the Chairman.

—THE circular issued by the A. O. U. Committee on the eligibility or ineligibility of the European House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) in America calls for information in respect to the economic relations of this bird to agriculture and horticulture. The circular presents a series of twenty-eight questions, to which the Committee desires explicit answers from those who may be willing and able to aid it by statements of facts derived from their own investigations or experience. A digest of the statements received will be presented in their report to the Union at its next annual meeting. The circulars may be obtained from, and returned to, either Dr. J. B. Holder, Chairman of the Committee, New York; Mr. Eugene P. Bicknell, New York; Mr. H. A. Purdie, Boston, Mass.; Mr. Nathan Clifford Brown, Portland, Me.; or Mr. Montague Chamberlain, St. John, N. B.

—THE 'First International Ornithological Congress,' under the patronage of his Royal Highness, Archduke Rudolf, will be held in Vienna; April 7 to 14, 1884. Three special subjects have been announced for consideration, viz: (1) an international bird-protection law; (2) the derivation of the domestic fowl, and the rearing and propagation of poultry in general; (3) the establishment of a network of ornithological observation stations throughout the world.

—IN consequence of unavoidable delays the vignette for the cover of 'The Auk' was not prepared in time for use in the January number. The figure of the Great Auk (*Alca impennis*) now presented is reduced (with permission) from the plate of this species in Mr. Cory's 'Beautiful and Curious Birds of the World.'

* Through the kindness of Prof. S. F. Baird, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, these schedules have been furnished to the Committee free of charge.